Business Plan
2016–2017

Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness

NOVA SCOTIA

Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness

Business Plan 2016 – 2017

BACKGROUND

Nova Scotia and the Maritime region have barriers that prevent and hold back business start-up and growth, trade and innovation. The service government provides can also be a barrier.

Two key documents – the One Nova Scotia Report and the Charting a Path for Growth Report called for less – and better – regulation and improved government service as a means to improve business competitiveness and enhance regional collaboration and alignment.

In March 2015, the Premiers of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick announced the creation of a Joint Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness. In November 2015, Prince Edward Island joined the office, making it a Maritime initiative.

MANDATE

The Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness was established to provide strategic advice and operational oversight to develop and implement a Maritime agenda to identify and eliminate unnecessary rules, processes and practices. In doing so, the Office will contribute to improving the province's and region's competitive position through regulatory reform.

2016 – 2017 PRIORITIES

1. **Full implementation of the regional regulatory reform agenda announced November 2015**

    - **Implementation of Charter of Principles to guide regulators toward less and better regulation**

      Leading jurisdictions in regulatory reform, nationally and internationally, adopt clear and straightforward principles to guide regulators on when and how to regulate and when not to regulate. Currently, none of the three Provinces has such a code, but based on consultation and the research and advice of the Office, a draft code has been developed and agreed upon, and the provinces have decided to adopt it as a common code for the three of them. It will be known as the Premiers' Charter of Principles. Its core themes are -

* regulation should be a last resort not a first resort, and the governments favour non-regulatory options like education, voluntary compliance, incentives and self-regulation if they can do the job.

* if regulation is enacted, it should be in the lightest form possible, and based on a compelling cost benefit analysis that includes solid understanding of its cost to business and government and its overall economic impact.

* the process of making regulations should be transparent and consultative with affected parties.

The Premiers' Charter will be rigorously applied to proposals for new regulations and the evaluation of existing regulatory programs.

- **Implementation and Compliance with Regulatory Accountability and Reporting Act**

  The governments of the three provinces committed to adopt common legislation to require the government of each province to adhere to the Premiers' Charter of Governing Principles for Regulation in exercising their respective regulatory authority and to also require an annual public report of measurable progress in reducing the burden of regulation on citizens and businesses.

  The first annual report will be completed by June 30th, 2016.

- **Tracking and Measuring the Regulatory Burden**

  The key to an accountable regulatory system is a reliable method of measuring and tracking the costs of regulation, allowing the public, government and stakeholders to see whether the three governments' commitment to reducing burden is producing results. The Office is in the process of developing such a model now, taking into account leading practice in other jurisdictions and, after consultation with stakeholders, the three provinces will adopt it as a common model for accountability. This regional partnership to undertake a common approach to regulatory impact analysis is a first in Canada.

- **Implementing regional changes to reduce red tape and enhance inter-provincial business**

  * Procurement: adoption of common solicitation and legal documents among the three provinces.

  Procurement spending by the three governments is a major economic lever. Each province currently has different documents and procedures for procurement, making the conduct of business in the three provinces more complex and cumbersome than

necessary. By moving to common procedures and documents, it will be easier for businesses to operate across the three provinces. It will also make joint procurement, where the provinces combine their purchasing power, much more effective and less costly for government and business.

* Employment Standards Reporting Requirements: harmonization or mutual recognition to eliminate unnecessary differences.

The three Maritime Provinces recognize there are a number of differences in provincial employment and labour standards laws. There are different requirements for employers and different rules that are applied within Maritime workplaces. These differences are often unnecessary. The three Premiers want to harmonize, simplify and eliminate those differences, making it easier for businesses that employ people in all three provinces – or may want to – or employees that may work in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The Premiers are committed to mutually recognize or harmonize requirements on things such as pay stub information and to explore a number of other areas where the region can benefit from a harmonized approach. As a signal of this commitment, the three provinces will be introducing legislation in the Spring of 2016 to harmonize - or mutually recognize – the kinds of records employers need to keep.

In addition, the three Premiers intend to move toward a shared date of April 1st for future minimum wage changes.

2. Accelerating Trade Liberalization

A key objective of the Office is to ensure that the Maritime Provinces have the most liberal and open inter-provincial trade in the country as the Maritime Provinces must have competitive advantages as they confront their significant economic and demographic challenges and take advantage of Canada's new international trade agreements involving Europe and the Pacific.

To get there, three elements critical to open trading must be addressed:

a) **Trade rules and policy.** Trade policies between the Maritime Provinces must, on an accelerated basis, be at least as liberal as the free trade arrangements Canada has with other countries and the most liberal trading arrangements between any provinces in Canada.

b) **Trade mechanics.** Not only must the right trade rules and policies be put in place, there must be robust "mechanics" underneath them to make sure they get implemented in practice, to ensure that any unintended obstacles and barriers are removed and do not remain embedded in underlying practices and procedures of individual provinces

c) **Regulatory reduction, harmonization or mutual recognition.** There are many unnecessary regulatory differences between the provinces, which are a barrier on the free movement of people, goods and services across borders. These differences add cost and complexity to economic activity between the provinces and they must be removed as part of the liberalization of trade between the provinces.

3. Improving Service and Predictability

The expectation of businesses and citizens is that the regulatory system -- and the supports around it – is transparent and predictable. Service levels should not vary across regulatory programs and departments.

Service standards can provide the predictability needed by business to grow and help the economy to thrive.

The Office will provide guidance, leadership and support in developing, based on high volume transactions requiring authorizations, a selection of service standards important to the growth of businesses.

It is anticipated that the service standards, performance targets and results will be published on an annual basis – in the annual report produced by the Office. In working with other provinces, the Office anticipates service standards will be developed for high priority areas by end of 2016.

Departmental Expenses Summary
($ thousands)

Programs and Services	2015-2016 Estimate	2015-2016 Forecast	2016-2017 Estimate
Administration	—	—	1670
Total - Departmental Expenses	—	—	1670
Ordinary Recoveries	—	—	96
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	—	—	8

Note:
For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2
For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1